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SUBJECT: THAILAND POLITICAL UPDATE: MORE CALLS FOR THAKSIN'S RESIGNATION

REF: BANGKOK 1408 AND PREVIOUS

¶11. (U) Summary: The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) has threatened to call a boycott of Singapore goods if the Singapore government does not scrap the takeover of Shin Corp by Temasek Holdings. A prominent Monk has issued a strong call for Thaksin to resign while the National Police Spokesman has suggested that Thaksin should leave the scene. The latest ABAC poll shows that close to half of those polled in Bangkok want Thaksin out. End summary.

PAD WANTS SINGAPORE INVESTMENT FIRM TO BACK OUT

¶12. (SBU) The People's Alliance for Democracy yesterday called on the Singapore government to scrap the Shin Corp deal or face a boycott of Singapore products in Thailand. The group's leadership has reportedly submitted a letter to the Singapore Embassy demanding that Prime Minister Lee cancel the takeover of Shin Corp by Temasek Holdings, an investment arm of the Singapore government, by March 9. The letter claims that the deal was seen as threat to Thailand's security as it would allow Singapore to control several important sectors of Thailand's infrastructure, including mobile phone and television networks, satellite communications and airlines. It also said that if the Singapore government failed to do as requested, Singapore would face boycott of its products and would be seen as interfering with security of Thailand. One of the PAD leaders, announced that on March 9, thousands of demonstrators would march to the Singapore Embassy to step up pressure on the Singapore government to scrap the Shin Corp deal. (Comment: There does not seem to be any chance of this happening. End comment.)

WELL-KNOWN MONK CALLS FOR THAKSIN'S RESIGNATION

¶13. (U) Mincing no words in an address at a temple in northeastern Thailand on March 7, popular monk Lungta Maha Bua called on Thaksin to resign. Lungta told his audience that Thaksin has become "absolutely tainted...his rotten body being unable to do anything else but breathing." He appealed for Thaksin to step down, saying that "the country has suffered enough" under his administration. A former supporter of the PM from a TRT region, this monk was one of the early defectors from Thaksin's camp last year.

NO COINCIDENCE THAT THAKSIN CABINET APPROVES PAYOUTS TO VICTIMS OF THE OCTOBER 1973 UPRISING

¶14. (SBU) In a thinly-veiled bid for support, Thaksin has compared himself to victims of the October 1973 uprising. The cabinet on March 7 approved compensation for the victims and relatives of the October 1973 student uprising -- over 30 years after the fact. At a meeting afterwards with representatives of the uprising victims, Thaksin said that "These people have fought for democracy at the cost of their life. As the product of democracy, I really recognize their value." Thaksin told the group that "What I'm fighting for today is to maintain the democracy that you all have created at the cost of your life. I can't bear seeing a group of people trying to destroy it. Me too, I'm ready to uphold democracy at the cost of my life."

POLICE SPOKESMAN BREAKS RANKS -- CALLS FOR THAKSIN TO STEP ASIDE

¶15. (U) Police Department Spokesman Pol. Gen. Achirawit Suwanphesat, after having earlier complained about effects the constant demonstrating was having on the police, called for both sides to reconsider their stances. He said that for the sake of national unity Thaksin should temporarily withdraw from politics and that the opposition should participate in the April general election. Achirawit also called the general public to turn on their cars, headlights during the daytime to support his demand.

BANGKOK POLL NOT FAVORABLE TO THAKSIN

¶16. (U) According to an ABAC poll, some 48 percent of those polled in Bangkok want Thaksin to resign and 35 percent want him to stay on. The poll of 2,175 Bangkok residents was published on March 7. According to the survey, 46 percent would be in favor of a royally-appointed Prime Minister. Suan Dusit Poll on the other hand, has announced its suspension of polling activities, claiming that political opinions are so sharply drawn that conducting a poll would be dangerously divisive.

BOYCE